



SENATOR THE HON SIMON BIRMINGHAM

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia to host virtual WTO ministerial meeting

Australia will tonight host a virtual meeting of 22 World Trade Organization (WTO) ministers, to drive negotiations of global rules on fisheries subsidies and discuss the role of the WTO in contributing to the global economic recovery from COVID-19.

Federal Trade Minister Simon Birmingham, who will chair the meeting, said maintaining open trade settings would continue to support the quickest possible recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“As an outward looking nation, where one in five jobs are trade related, Australia welcomes this opportunity to discuss how WTO members can cooperate and work together to keep goods, supplies and services flowing around the world,” Minister Birmingham said.

“Given the major disruption to the global economy as a result of COVID-19, it is crucial WTO members continue to work on initiatives to maintain supply chains and keep markets open.

“With global merchandise trade, according to the WTO, expected to drop by 9.2 per cent in 2020, where possible we need to intensify efforts to finalise key WTO initiatives including work to address unsustainable fisheries subsidies as well as negotiations on agriculture, e-commerce and services domestic regulation.”

Minister Birmingham said Australia continued to drive efforts to finalise negotiations on a new WTO agreement to discipline fisheries subsidies.

“At a time when the world is facing a sharp decline in fish stocks, an agreement on global fisheries subsidies would be critical to help to curb overfishing as well as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing around the world,” Minister Birmingham said.

“We are committed to finalising negotiations as quickly and substantially as possible and will work constructively with major fishing nations to conclude a highly ambitious set of global rules.

“Ambassador Santiago Wills, Chair of the Negotiating Group on Fisheries Subsidies, with whom I spoke last week, will also share his views at the meeting on how best to reach agreement on outstanding aspects of the negotiations.”

The meeting will be attended by representatives from Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

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